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| ***Coach Suspends Entire Team Over Poor Discipline, Cyberbullying*** |  |
| Yahoo Sports Utah coach suspends his entire team over poor discipline, cyberbullying Cameron Smith September 26, 2013 6:41 AM  Matt Labrum had seen enough.  As the head football coach at Union High in Roosevelt, Utah, Labrum had watched his players receive discipline for skipping classes at school. He'd been more troubled by others who were accused of cyberbullying fellow teens. He didn't like any of it.  So, after a loss to Judge Memorial Catholic High, Labrum told his team that as of that moment, they were no longer a team. All players — 80 in total — were required to turn in their jerseys and all equipment. No one would play football again until they "earned the privilege to play."  Incredibly, the players say they have embraced the tough love.  "We looked at it as a chance to say, 'Hey, we need to focus on some other things that are more important than winning a football game,'" Labrum told the Deseret News. "We got an emotional response from the boys. I think it really meant something to them, which was nice to see that it does mean something. There was none of them that fought us on it."  The early results, as documented in this terrific feature from the Deseret News, have been remarkable. Players showed up at school the following day — a Saturday — at 7 a.m. and were told how they could re-earn a spot on the team. Teenagers have been cleaning up area streets as part of new team-mandated community service work. They are attending character classes during hours when they previously would have been practicing.  Just as importantly, the team's natural leaders are starting to realize that they need to be more vocal and step in to help those teammates who go astray. A key part of Labrum's decision to suspend the entire team was borne of his frustration that the players who did live up to his expectations were not rising up taking control of the locker room. Now, that is changing. Only two of the team's seven original captains were re-elected during the team meeting the day after the Judge Memorial loss.  Others are reflecting on how their role as a member of the football team makes them role models in the town as a whole. Everything is changing, if slowly.  "I'm a pretty silent person, so I didn’t really say much," junior Jordan Gurr, one of the two captains re-elected, told the Deseret News. "We'd talk to [players who had misbehaved] after practice sometimes; we'd run. It didn't work out very well.  "[Suspending the entire team] gives me a second chance."  Senior running back Gavin Nielsen had a similar perspective:  "One of my weaknesses that I wrote down," he said, referring to an exercise the players engaged in during Monday's character class, "was that I wasn’t holding people accountable on the field and off the field. As a leader, on the field and off I have to hold people accountable."  His passion for football hasn’t diminished, but Nielsen said he does have a new perspective on what it means to wear the Union High uniform.  "I still have the love for it and everything,” he said Monday while leaning on a shovel he was using to remove weeds as part of his community service. “But it helped me realize, it’s not all about football."  **Questions:**  1. What evidence does the article present that players embraced their coach’s tough love approach?  2. Why do you think sports teams, at all levels, suspend players for off-field misconduct? What pressures do they face to do so? Why is this?  3. How would you respond if your entire sports team was suspended for widespread misconduct, or something similar happened in another extracurricular activity?  4. What influences the development of moral character in you and others your age that you know?  5. What can adults and peers do to develop kids’ moral character?  6. Why does the coach consider players partly responsible for each other's actions? How did this influence his decision to suspend the whole team?  7. What are some things players had to do to earn back a spot on the team?  8. What point did Labrum make by suspending his team, rather than just requiring them to perform these tasks?  9. Do you think the suspension, and the required tasks, will contribute to solving the players’ problems? Why or why not?  10. According to other sources, the alleged cyberbullying strongly influenced the coach’s decision. Because the cyberbullying was anonymous, nobody was able to trace it to a particular player or group of players, but the victim suspected football players were behind it. How should the coach have handled the situation? Was what he did right? Explain. | |